

REHABILITATION OF JUVENILE DELINQUENTS: IMPLICATIONS FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the issue of rehabilitating the juvenile delinquents in order to bring peace and development to the various communities. The study employed a surveys study design. The population consisted of young male and female members of Akinyele Local Government Area of Oyo state. A sample of 90 subjects was used for the study. Data collected were subjected to simple frequency count and percentages Chi-square statistical tool was used for the analysis of the hypotheses. The study revealed that juvenile delinquency is a social menace that could lead to social disorder and which does not augur well for the development of communities. Based on the findings, it is recommended that parents, government, non-governmental organizations should make efforts at rehabilitating the deviant youth so that they would be useful to themselves as well as help build a formidable community.

KEYWORDS: social menace, social disorder, correction, and participation

INTRODUCTION

The term juvenile delinquency is a common term in every society. It is a term that deals with deviant behaviour of the young ones in the society, deviant behaviour means when the young ones are not conforming to the law or normal behaviour of the society. These young ones in question are supposed to be the leaders of tomorrow and so care must be taken to tame them and lead them in the right direction for where adequate and proper care is lacking, they tend to constitute social menace to the community and its development.

The concept of delinquency was first developed in the 19th century before which there was little distinction between adult and juvenile offenders. Children were almost subjected to the same form of punishment as adults. This situation led a group of reformers called "child savers" to think of separating adult delinquents from juvenile delinquents and so in 1899, Juvenile court was established in Chicago to handle the cases of minors who committed criminal offences (Adetoro, 2009). Adetoro also revealed that the juvenile courts and codes defined child's behaviour as a status offence emanating from child abuse and neglect and as such would allow the courts to intervene to save a child from harm and therefore classify a child as a delinquent. An attempt to protect and transform the lives of these children and reform them led to the establishment of reform homes (Adetoro, 2009).

Juvenile delinquency is a term that refers to children who act against the law. (<http://en.wikipedia.org>). Juvenile delinquency to Sanni et al (2010) refers to delinquent and criminal behaviour among young people as they negotiate the transition from childhood to adulthood in an increasingly complex and confusing world. A juvenile delinquent therefore is that person who repeatedly commits crime. It has also been proved that a delinquent will do to someone else what has been done to him.

This may be due to mental disorders/behavioural issues and such are usually diagnosed with conduct disorder Holmes et al (2001), . Some of the theoretical causes of juvenile delinquency include the following:

- (a) Rational Choice: This theory explains that the causes of crime lie within the individual offender rather than in their external environment. The classicists, who propounded this theory, believe that offenders are motivated by rational self-interest. To prevent delinquency, therefore, worthwhile values must be instilled in these young children, helping them to choose things that are of value against invaluable things.
- (b) Theory of social disorganization as propounded by the positivists attributed delinquency to the breakdown of communal institutions and communal relationships that traditionally encouraged relationships among people. If the family, school, church and social group play their roles well as agents of socialization, children would be taught to eschew unacceptable behaviour and respect the rights of others thereby reducing antisocial and violent behaviour to the barest minimum (Walkate, 2003).

- (c) Strain theory states that crime is caused by the difficulty those in poverty have in achieving socially valued goals by legitimate means (Eadie and Mortley, 2003). Since it may be difficult for them to achieve valued goals through legitimate means, they may decide to use criminal means to achieve the goals.
- (d) The theory of differential association suggests that young people are motivated to commit crimes by delinquent peers and learn criminal skills from them.
- (e) Labeling theory as stated by Eadie and Mortley, (2003) states that once young people have been labeled as criminal they are more likely to offend and that once labeled as deviant a young person may accept that role and be more likely to associate with others who have been similarly labeled.
- (f) Family environment, Graham and Bawling (1991), Walkate (2003), and Farrinton (2002) all believe that low level of parental supervision, parental conflict or separation, criminal parents or siblings, parents who do not pay attention to their children are likely to become delinquents exhibiting deviant offending behaviours.

The above are some of the causative theories of juvenile delinquency. The important thing is for all hands to be on deck to curb children from becoming maladjusted children for rehabilitation can be very expensive. Expensive, in the sense that it may take years for delinquent children to be brought back on course. The common saying is that prevention is better than cure. Prevention should be a watchword for all and sundry in the community. Delinquency prevention is the broad term for every effort aimed at preventing youth from becoming involved in criminal, or any other anti social behaviour.

There are various manifestations of juvenile delinquencies in the community today. These include, drinking, smoking, drug taking, bad mode of dressing, absconding from homes and living on the streets where they begin to learn to pick-pocket, (Oloruntimilehin, 1998).

Other manifestations include cruelty, bullying, fighting, vandalism, use of foul language, drug abuse etc. Edelman (1995), reveals that about 1, 2 3 4 youths run away from home and 2, 255 teenagers dropout of school each day. Every five minutes a juvenile is arrested for some kind of violent crime and every two hours a child is armed with a weapon. All these manifestations of juvenile should be taken care of by rehabilitating those children that are already caught in the web of delinquencies so that they would be useful not only to themselves but also contribute to the process of the development of communities and the nation at large.

It should be noted that destitution, poor living conditions, inadequate education, malnutrition, illiteracy, unemployment and lack of leisure time activities are factors that marginalize young people which make some of them vulnerable to exploitations as well as involvement in criminal and other deviant behaviours, rehabilitation programmes should be put in place for these children so that they are gainfully employed. When they are gainfully employed, they are likely to desist from these deviant tendencies. World Youth Report (2005) reveals that young people constitute the most criminally active segment of the population and that eventually most young people will desist from criminal and deviant activity; (Youth at the United Nations: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/wpayjuvenile/htm>). It is to this end that preventive measures must be taken to prevent youth from deviant behaviours as well as planning for active rehabilitation programmes to redeem those who had become delinquents or even criminals. In thinking of preventive measures, youth at the United Nations, World programme of action for Youth (Accessed 19/5/2010), views that the development of social organization, particularly through youth organizations and community involvement should be fostered by a supportive social policy and within a legal framework. The document further states that government assistance should focus on facilitating the ability of community and youth organizations to express and evaluate their needs concerning the prevention of violence and crime, to formulate and implement actions for themselves and to cooperate with each other.

Rehabilitating delinquents presupposes corrections being imposed on these youth. The common historical form of correction have always been to offer punishment both corporal and capital as panacea to anti-social behaviour but people were against these forms of punishment and recommended the penitentiary system' which was a system by which offenders would be given a chance to think and have a change of heart and mend their ways (Skidmore,

1991). This goes to show that these delinquents should be corrected in a way that they would be useful to themselves and also serve as correctional vessels to others in the community.

Defining correction, Allen and Simonsen (1989) see correction as a professional service that applies a criminology knowledge base to the control and rehabilitation of the criminal offender. Correction to them occurs when the delinquent or criminal behaviour of an offender changed for good through various intervention programmes that will enable the offender to live a good, responsible and law abiding life again. With various correctional services put in place, juvenile delinquents will be restored to a condition of constructive, productive, mental, physical and social functioning level, which is considered normal, this eventually will have positive effect on the development of communities and the nation at large.

It should also be noted that delinquent behaviour spans both the rural and urban communities and so when planning for rehabilitation and correctional services, both communities should be put into consideration. For these deviant young people to be corrected and virtually rehabilitated to participate as active members of their community various homes had been established like Remand homes, approved institutions (where they can stay not exceeding a period of 3 years) for corrective training, both occupational and psycho social and the Borstal Institution. The emphasis in all these institutions is corrective training geared towards rehabilitation of these dented character (Okunola 2002).

This study therefore attempts to discover if rehabilitating the juvenile delinquents will contribute to the process of development in community. The study attempts to answer the question, is rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents of any use to the development of the community?

In other words, the essence of this study is to find out how rehabilitation of delinquents can bring improvements to the community in which we all live while specifically, the study aims at finding out the relationship between rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents and community development. The following research questions were raised

1. Will rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents make for active participation in community development?
2. Is there a relationship between juvenile delinquency and community peace?

Hypotheses

Two hypotheses were generated.

1. There is no relationship between rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents and active participation in community development.
2. There is no relationship between juvenile delinquency and community peace.

METHOD

The study was conducted in Akinyele Local Government Area of Oyo state. The population for the study consisted of youth in both the rural and urban areas of the local government, a total of 100 boys and girls were randomly selected for the study.

Instrument

The instrument used for the study consisted of a set of questionnaire items titled Juvenile Delinquent Rehabilitation Questionnaire (JDRQ) and the instrument examined various issues related to the subject of study.

Validation and Reliability Instrument

To ensure face and content validities of the instrument, copies were given to experts in the Department of Guidance and Counseling, University of Ado Ekiti and the raised suggestions were made use of in the final draft of the questionnaire. The items were tested on youth in Ona-Ara Local Government at two weeks interval before testing it on the actual subjects of study. The result yielded a test retest Pearson Correlation Coefficient of 0.72.

Design and Statistics design. The data collected were analyzed using simple percentages and Chi Square statistical analysis.

RESULTS : The findings for all the hypotheses are presented here using the descriptive and chi-square analysis.

Presentation of Results

Research Hypothesis 1: There is no relationship between rehabilitation of juvenile delinquencies and active participation in the process of community development

Table 1: Responses Indicating Percentages and Frequencies on Rehabilitation of Juvenile delinquents for active participation in Community Development

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD
1.	Juvenile delinquency is a social problem	28 31.1%	54 60.0%	7 7.8%	1 1.1%
2.	Juvenile delinquency refers to children who act against the law and children who commit crime repeatedly	23 25.6%	55 61.1%	10 11.1%	2 2.2%
3.	Causes of social delinquency include social disorganization, peer association and family factor	24 26.7%	55 61.1%	10 11.1%	1 1.1%
4.	Delinquency prevention is important for anti social behaviour	30 33.3%	44 48.9%	15 16.7%	1 1.1%
5.	Juvenile delinquents constitute social menace to the society	24 26.7%	56 62.2%	9 10.0%	1 1.1%
6.	Juvenile delinquency ranges from violations of legal and social norms to serve crimes committed by minors	16 17.8%	64 71.1%	7 7.8%	3 3.3%
7.	There is a preference for the social rather than judicial approaches to dealing with young offenders	19 21.1%	52 57.8%	18 20.0%	1 1.1%
8.	Living with other people rather than one's parents encourage delinquent behaviour	23 25.6%	50 55.6%	13 14.4%	4 4.4%
9.	Rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents involves separating the delinquent from the negative influence	14 15.6%	61 67.8%	14 15.6%	1 1.1%
10.	Orderliness in the community is a sign of growth	34 37.8%	40 53.3%	8 8.9%	- -
11.	Community should provide specific educational, employment and leisure programmes that would distract the attention of youth from violent behaviour	26 28.9%	58 64.4%	6 6.7%	- -
12.	Parent-child integration would lead to peace in the community	31 34.4%	55 61.1%	3 3.3%	1 1.1%

From Table 1, it could be deduced that juvenile delinquency is a social menace as seen in the 91.1% responses that agreed to this statement. The table also revealed that social disorganization, peer association and family factor cause delinquent behaviour. This is evident in the 88.8% agreement to the factor from the respondents. The table on the whole revealed that preventing delinquent behaviour would enable them to participate actively in the process of community development (83.4% agreed to this fact). It was revealed that when there is parent child integration there would be peace in the community (95.5%). The table reveals that orderliness is a sign of growth in the community (91.3%).

Hypothesis 1: There is no relationship between rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents and active participation in the process of community development.

Table 2: Chi-square analysis of relationship between rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents and active participation in community development

S/N	Items	SD	D	A	SA	X ² cal	X ² tab	df	P
1.	Rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents involves separating the delinquent from the negative influence	-	6	58	26				
2.	Orderliness in the community is a sign of growth	-	8	48	34	330.88	7.815	3	0.000
3.	Community should provide specific educational employment and leisure programmes that would distract the attention of youth from violent behaviour	1	3	55	31				
3.	Parent-child integration would lead to peace in the community	-	6	58	26				
	Total	-	23	219	117				

As shown above $X^2_{cal} = 330.889$. This is greater than $X^2_{tab} = 7.815$ at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This shows that there is a strong relationship between rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents and active participation in community development process.

Table 3: Frequency/ Percentage responses of subjects to relationship between juvenile delinquency and community peace

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD
1.	Rehabilitation programmes help delinquents to be involved in useful community activities	28 31.1%	55 61.1%	7 7.8%	- -
2.	Institutions, communities should be involved in rehabilitation programmes	34 37.8%	53 58.9%	3 3.3%	- -
3.	The family which is the smallest unit in the community should be involved in preventing violent behaviour	47 52.2%	36 40.0%	5 5.6%	2 2.2%
4.	Rehabilitating delinquents will bring improvement to communities	34 37.8%	49 54.4%	7 7.8%	- -

Table 3 reveals that 92.2% was recorded as agreeing with the fact that rehabilitation programmes help delinquents to be involved in useful community activities while 96.7% respondents believed that all hands should be on deck for rehabilitating the delinquents. 92.2% is of the opinion that family, which is the smallest unit, should play active role in preventing delinquent behaviours and violence in the community and 92.2% believed that rehabilitating delinquents would bring improvement to the community.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between juvenile delinquency and community peace

Table 4: Relationship between juvenile delinquency and community peace

S/N	Items	SD	D	A	SA	X ² cal	X ² tab	df	P
1.	Rehabilitation programmes help delinquents to be involved in useful community activities	28	55	7	-				
2.	Institutions, communities should be involved in rehabilitation programme	34	53	3	-	286.51	7.815	3	0.000
3.	The family which is the smallest unit in the community should be involved in preventing violent behaviour	47	36	5	2				
4.	Rehabilitating delinquents will bring improvement to communities	34	49	7	-				
	Total	130	206	19	5				

From the table above $X^2 \text{ cal} > X^2 \text{ tab} = 7.815$ at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis, which states there is no relationship between juvenile delinquency and community peace is rejected and so the alternative hypothesis, which establishes relationship between the two variables, is upheld.

DISCUSSION

The study, which assesses the implication of rehabilitation of juvenile delinquency on the process of community development, comes up with the following findings.

- That Juvenile delinquency is a social menace that should be prevented and curbed
- That parental care is highly important in the prevention of juvenile delinquency
- That various rehabilitation programmes should be put in place to correct these deviant youth
- That when delinquency is reduced there would be active participation in the progress of community development and this would lead to community peace and this will lead to better living as Lowelt (1976) sees community development as a movement to promote better living for the whole community with the active participation and on the initiative of the community.

Based on the above findings the following recommendations are made:

That law enforcement agents should be trained, equipped and encouraged by the government towards effective control of criminal acts in the society. Parents should try to take good care of their children, supervise them as much as possible not abandoning them to a game of chance. They should monitor them properly to prevent them from mixing with bad gang that can influence their lives negatively.

For those who are already marked delinquents, government, non-governmental organizations and communities should embark on rehabilitation programmes that would make them useful elements and thereby contributing to the process of growth in the community. Efforts should be made in engaging these students in useful activities that would make them desist from negative tendencies that would lead to chaos instead of peace in the community.

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